

DRIMOLEN NATIONAL HERITAGE SITE: FENCING AND GATING OF NATIONAL HERITAGE SITE

Introduction:

In 2005, Dr Colin Menter (then of the University of the Witwatersrand), permit holder for the Drimolen National Heritage Site made application, and was granted the necessary approvals, for the erection of an inner boundary fence encompassing the excavations at the Drimolen National Heritage Site, located in the Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site, Gauteng.

This fence was not erected, for various reasons.

Subsequently, in 2014, Dr Menter together with the land owner, Mr. Dean Smith, submitted an application for the erection of 3 security gates and the installation of a 1.5m fence at Drimolen National Heritage Site; which was approved under permit number 1843, dated 17 June 2014 (please see attached application from Dr. Menter, and SAHRA permit).

There have now been subsequent discussions regarding the proposed fence and gateways between Dr. Menter, Dean Smith, the officials from the APM Unit of the South African Heritage Resources Agency and officials of the Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site Management Authority.

It has now transpired that the landowner, Mr. Dean Smith, would like to erect a boundary fence along the same route as that initially requested (and authorised) by Dr. Menter in 2005. Furthermore, Mr. Smith would like to install 4 security gates, as opposed to the 3 security gates authorised under SAHRA permit 1843.

This application has been prepared and submitted by the Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site Management Authority, on behalf of Mr. Dean Smith, who will carry out the proposed activities, should they be approved.

Proposed Activities:

The diagram below prepared by Mr. Dean Smith highlights the proposed boundary fence and the proposed gateways, within the larger declared boundary of the Drimolen National Heritage Site:



Figure 1: Proposed Inner Boundary Fence and Security Gates at Drimolen National Heritage Site

Proposed inner boundary fence:

In comparison to the proposed inner boundary fence approved by SAHRA in 2014, the proposed boundary fence shown in the diagram above has been expanded in a north westerly direction, turning north to encompass more of the western side of the National Heritage Site. The fence is then proposed to run in an easterly/ south easterly direction to fence off the National Heritage Site in parallel to the existing access road running through the site (visible along the north eastern to north western boundary in the above image).

The western side of the Drimolen National Heritage Site has numerous sinkholes, which the landowner would like to secure, in order to prevent the free roaming game from injuring themselves in the sinkholes (for example, the Eland in 2013), or taking up residence and possibly becoming nuisance causing animals (such as the warthogs in 2012 and 2013). There are existing fencing poles already in place in the western side of site, which the landowner intends to use to string the fence. The Drimolen research team has confirmed that as these are pre-existing poles, they will not interfere with their research goals and activities. The areas to be fenced off to the western side of the site have not yet been fully excavated by the Drimolen research team; however, the team is expanding its excavations of the upper trench in a westerly direction. It therefore is

logical to secure these areas before excavating, in order to prevent any possible damage to the site by the game.

Although the landowners have been very good at keeping their guests out of the excavation areas, the proposed enclosing of the “front entrance” of the site with the fence, running across the northerly west and east area of the site in parallel with the access road, together with the proposed security gate at this entrance, will greatly enhance the security of the areas of scientific interest.

It is submitted that the visual impact of the expanded inner boundary fence will, like the 2014 approved fence, be of very low visual impact. The area of greatest visual impact will be where the proposed fence runs parallel with the existing access road, and only then to people accessing the remainder of the landowner’s property. It is submitted that this visual impact will in fact serve as a further deterrent to possible unauthorised personnel by highlighting the secured nature of the site.

As with the 2014 SAHRA approved inner boundary fence, the new proposed inner boundary fence is to be an approximately 1.2 -1.5 m high, 15 strand fence.

Proposed gates:

An additional gate has been proposed by the landowner, in conjunction with the three security gates approved by SAHRA in 2014.

The proposed additional gate is located on the western side of the proposed inner boundary fence. This gate will allow access to the western and northern western areas of the excavation areas and unexcavated sinkholes. With this additional gate in place, it will now be possible to get from one side of the site to the other with relative ease, without having to go through the current excavation areas.

Landowner approval:

The landowner has confirmed to the Drimolen research team that he will undertake these proposed activities. To this end, an email conversation has been attached to the permit application, between the landowner, Mr. Dean Smith and Lindsey Smith of the Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site Management Authority, discussing the proposed activities. The SAHRA APM unit members who attended the December 2014 inspection of the Drimolen National Heritage Site were also duly informed at that inspection by the Drimolen research team of the landowner’s intentions.

Monitoring and undertaking of proposed fencing and gating activities:

As noted above, the landowner, Mr. Dean Smith, will be undertaking the installation of the fence and the gates.

The monitoring of the activities will be undertaken by the Drimolen research team members; and where they are unavailable, by the Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site Management Authority.

END

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